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"Their News Bulletins are Bullets"

As soon as he returned home, Mr. Citizen rushed towards the living room and turned on the television.

7:00 p.m.: NBN news bulletin began with comments on the government "the legitimacy of which has expired", the "wisdom" of Speaker Nabih Berri, and "affinity" with Michel Aoun.

7:30 p.m.: He switched to Al-Manar, which was broadcasting a documentary on the Normandie dump and Sanioura's "violation" of public properties in Saida. All that preceded by an "in-depth analysis" of the political situation. The anchorwoman launched an attack against what she called the "Condoleezza Rice's government in Lebanon".

7:55 p.m.: He switched to LBC and saw a group of reporters scattered all across the country covering the people's reactions over a news that military intelligence officers had allegedly beaten at least two of the people accused of attempting to assassinate Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. LBC also showed the parents of the "victims", dressed along austere traditional Wahabi style at the residence of Samir Geagea, who was also "shocked" by the news. The broadcast as usual gave a broad vision of world politics with Lebanon as its center.

8:05 p.m.: He switched to Future TV which announced that Sa'ad Hariri had guaranteed the creation of an international tribunal to prosecute his father's assassins under Chapter VII and that justice would be achieved, adding that a president should not be elected directly by the people.

After listening carefully to the news for almost an hour, Mr. Citizen's blood pressure was ranging between extremely high and terribly low. His heartbeats thundered throughout the room. So he began wondering about his location on the country's complex political map:

"I am against throwing the Normandie garbage into the sea and on the roads, so I am with Al-Manar and Hassan Nasrallah.

"I am against hitting and torturing people, so I support the LBC and Samir Geagea.

"I am with justice, so I support the Future TV and Sa'ad Hariri.

"I am with affinity between politicians, so I support the NBN, Nabih Berri and Michel Aoun".

Yet he gave it a second thought.

"I remember that the issue of public properties in Saida has been ongoing since ages. Al-Manar knew about it but failed to mention it. Hizbullah ministers were part of Sanioura's government and gave it a vote of confidence.

Moreover, Al-Manar did not object to the fact that Condoleezza Rice was backing the Maliki government in Iraq. So I am against Al-Manar and Hizbullah.

"I remember that LBC and Samir Geagea were afraid of the extremists' cleavers during the Syrian presence in Lebanon and that people who disappeared at Lebanese Forces' checkpoints during the civil war were never remembered by LBC or Geagea even though their disappearance must have strongly violated their human rights. So I am against LBC and Samir Geagea.

"I remember that Sa'ad Hariri allied with Hizbullah, Walid Jumblat and the Lebanese Forces in the parliamentary elections that brought about the current majority. Moreover, saying that the election of a president requires consensus, because Lebanon is based on consensus, is odd, especially because the majority of ministers in the Cabinet does not want consensus because the majority should rule. So I am against Future TV and Sa'ad Hariri.

Luckily, the citizen had some idea on Albert Einstein's relativity theory. Hence, he could understand that the Normandie garbage is poisonous to Al-Manar and NBN and is either inexistent or healthy to the Future TV and LBC. He also understood why violations of public properties in Beirut's southern suburbs are raised by LBC and the Future TV, which always fail to mention violations committed in the Beirut Central District with regards to maritime properties. As to those who disappeared at Lebanese checkpoints, they do not belong to the dictionary of NBN, LBC or the Future TV.

If the "truth" was a matter of life and death for the Future TV and LBC, it did not include the assassination attempt against Hassan Nasrallah. Consequently, what is present on one side is not on the other side or it is but in a different form or in a world where space and time are relative and where matter and antimatter engage in a dance of violence.

Mr. Citizen knew that all these television channels are "morally and financially" owned by the same people whose faces invade our screens everyday. Consequently, he knew that he was not watching the news but "their" news and "their" bulletins. He knew that the word "news" required a minimum respect of objectivity that these channels cannot afford and are not capable of.

That is how Mr. Citizen discovered that privatization does not always mean "openness". Consequently, the "independent media" in Lebanon is less independent than the "official media" (i.e. Télé Liban).

Then he switched to CNN and BBC whispering, "I am now with Bush and Blair". However, his wife reminded him that these two channels were embedded in the Basra and Baghdad military campaigns to such an extent that their correspondents rejoiced openly at the defeat of the Iraqi army, after they had described it as the fifth or sixth most powerful army in the world.

"But they offer excellent programs," he turned to his wife and said.

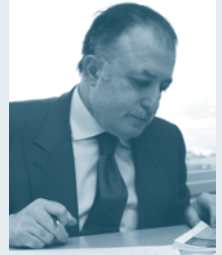
"I don't like the word 'program' especially after the oil-for-food program which led to the death of more than half a million Iraqi children", she answered.

"So I am against Bush, Blair and the United Nations", he said.

The next day, he found "Nahr al-Bared" and "Ain al-Hilweh" in flames and dead bodies everywhere. He said to himself: "Their news are now bullets and blood".

He switched off the television, grabbed a book that he will soon be reading on board an imaginary train.

* The abovementioned TV stations are known to be directly linked with political parties and personalities.



Jawad N. Adra